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SPECIAL COMMITTEE FOR THE PREPARATION OF PLANS FOR THE CELEBRATION OF THE FIFTEENTH ANNIVERSARY OF THE UNIVERSAL DECLARATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE FIRST MEETING

Held at Headquarters, New York,
on Thursday, 17 January 1963, at 3.5 p.m.

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PRESENT:

Acting Chairman:	Mr. HUMPHREY	Director, Division of Human Rights
Chairman:	Mrs. TREE	United States of America
Rapporteur:	Mr. DEMETROPOULOS	Greece
Members:	Mr. GARCIA DEL SOLAR	Argentina
	Mr. BARTON	Canada
	Mr. M'ALALASEKERA	Ceylon
	Mr. J.SILVA	Ecuador
	Mr. DOUQUIN	France
	Mr. NABAVI	Iran
	Mr. CAPOTORTI Mr. SCOLAMIERO	Italy
	Mr. SAWAI	Japan
	Mr. RIFA'I	Jordan
	Mr. OSTROVSKI	Union of Soviet Socialist Republics
	Mr. VELAZQUEZ	Uruguay
Representatives of specialized agencies:		
	Mr. REYMOND	International Labour Organisation
	Mr. SALSAMENDI	United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization
	Dr. SACKS	World Health Organization
Representative of the United Nations Children's Fund:		
	Mr. LING	
Representatives of non-governmental organizations:		
Category A:	Mr. Paul BARTON	International Confederation of Free Trade Unions
	Mr. FLANZ	World Veterans Federation
	Mr. BARRETT-BROWN	World Federation of United Nations Associations
Secretariat:	Mr. HUMPHREY	Director, Division of Human Rights
	Mr. LAWSON	Secretary of the Committee

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ELECTION OF OFFICERS

The ACTING CHAIRMAN said that the Special Committee had been appointed by the Secretary-General in conformity with General Assembly resolution 1775 (XVII The plans which it would prepare for the celebration of the fifteenth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights would be submitted by the Secretary-General to the Commission on Human Rights, which was scheduled to meet at Geneva in March 1963. He invited the Committee to elect its officers.

Mr. OSTROVSKI (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) said that the celebration of the fifteenth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights had been the subject of much controversy in the Third Committee. In order to avoid further difficulties, he thought that the representative of an African, Asian or Latin American country should be elected as Chairman, as was customary in other United Nations organs.

Mr. JATIVA (Ecuador) said that the invitation the Ecuadorian delegation had received to participate in the Special Committee's work was a tribute to the country's traditions with regard to observance of human rights. He nominated Mrs. Tree (United States of America) as Chairman. Mrs. Tree's interest in human rights and her experience as United States representative in the Third Committee would be of great assistance to the Committee in the accomplishment of its task.

Mr. OSTROVSKI (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) said that, while he appreciated Mrs. Tree's ability and personal qualities, it would be inappropriate for the work of the Special Committee to be presided over by the representative of a country which had raised strong objections at the time resolution 1775 (XVII) had been adopted. The Soviet delegation had proposed amendments indicating that the situation regarding compliance with the Universal Declaration was deteriorating in a number of countries, particularly the United States. The United States delegation had, of course, opposed that amendment, just as it had objected to inserting a paragraph in the preamble stating that the fifteenth anniversary of the Universal Declaration might further promote universal respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms for all,

(Mr. Ostrovski, USSR)

without exception as to race, language, sex or religion. The United States delegation had also opposed the amendments of Mali and Guinea, which expressed the hope that the fifteenth anniversary of the Universal Declaration would mark the end of colonialism. The hostile attitude the United States had taken at the time of the adoption of the Declaration on the granting of independence to colonial countries and peoples should be borne in mind in that connexion. It would be paradoxical to elect as Chairman the representative of a country which violated not only human rights, but the Charter of the United Nations. He was therefore unable to support the nomination of Mrs. Tree.

Mrs. Tree (United States of America) was elected Chairman by acclamation.

Mr. CAPOTORTI (Italy) nominated Mr. García del Solar as Vice-Chairman. He hoped that the Committee would approve that choice in view of the great contribution made by the Latin American countries, especially Argentina, in the field of human rights.

Mr. García del Solar (Argentina) was elected Vice-Chairman by acclamation.

Mr. NABAVI (Iran) nominated Mr. Demetropoulos as Rapporteur. Mr. Demetropoulos was eminently qualified for that post by his experience of the work of a number of United Nations organs.

Mr. Demetropoulos (Greece) was elected Rapporteur by acclamation.

The CHAIRMAN, speaking on her own behalf and on that of the other officers, thanked the Committee for the confidence it had placed in them.

Mr. BOUQUIN (France) congratulated the officers on their election. Expressing particular satisfaction at the election of Mrs. Tree as Chairman, he recalled the important part played by her distinguished country-woman, Mrs. Roosevelt, in the preparation of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

Mr. BARTON (Canada), Mr. RIFAI (Jordan), Mr. CAPOTORTI (Italy), Mr. MALALASEKERA (Ceylon) and Mr. VELAZQUEZ (Uruguay) associated themselves with the congratulations expressed by the French representative.

Mr. OSTROVSKI (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) said he acknowledged the soundness of the principle the Secretary-General had followed

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in setting up the Special Committee, namely, that of inviting the countries which had participated in the drafting of resolution 1775 (XVII) and the sponsors of amendments to be members of the Special Committee. He was not, however, entirely satisfied with the composition of that Committee. He thought a recommendation might be made to the Secretary-General to consider the possibility of inviting other countries to sit on the Special Committee. While the participation of certain socialist countries might raise difficulties, there would certainly be no objection to the participation of African countries. The defence of human rights was indissolubly linked with the Declaration on the granting of independence to colonial countries and peoples, and without respect for the principles of that Declaration, there could be no question of the defence of human rights. It should also be borne in mind that the African countries which had gained their independence were taking an active part in the work of the United Nations and should therefore be invited to sit on the Special Committee.

Mr. BOUQUIN (France) pointed out that, under General Assembly resolution 1775 (XVII), the composition of the Special Committee was to be decided by the Secretary-General. He nevertheless agreed with the Soviet representative that it would be desirable for African countries to be represented, since their experience and ideas would be very helpful in the preparation of plans for the celebration. He found it surprising that a country like the United Kingdom, which had played an extremely important part in the drafting of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and in the discussion of resolution 1775 (XVII), was not represented. He asked the Chairman whether the Special Committee could ask the Secretary-General to consider the possibility of inviting a representative of the United Kingdom to take part in its work.

Mr. BARTON (Canada) supported the French representative's suggestion.

Mr. RIFA'I (Jordan) said that he entirely shared the Soviet representative's views. It would be an honour for the Special Committee to welcome representatives of the African and the socialist countries. It was not, however, for the Special Committee, but the General Assembly to make observations

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(Mr. Rifa'i Jordan)

on the composition of the Special Committee and to make recommendations on the matter to the Secretary-General. In order to overcome that procedural difficulty, he proposed that the summary record of the Special Committee's discussions should be brought to the Secretary-General's attention, without making any specific observations or requests. He hoped that the Secretary-General would take account of those discussions and take such steps as he thought necessary.

Mr. CAPOTORTI (Italy) supported the procedure suggested by the representative of Jordan. It would, however, be necessary to stress the Special Committee's express wish that the African countries and the United Kingdom should participate in its work, and he hoped that the Secretary-General would take that point of view into consideration.

Mr. OSTROVSKI (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) said he would like to know if the representative of the Secretary-General could enlighten the Committee on that point immediately. Noone questioned the fact that it was the Secretary-General's responsibility to determine the membership of the Special Committee. Technical problems were certainly involved but perhaps some way could be found to overcome them.

Mr. HUMPHREY (Secretariat) said he was sure that the Secretary-General would give most sympathetic consideration to the wishes expressed by various members of the Special Committee if the summary record of the discussion was transmitted to him.

ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA (ST/SG/AC.4/1)

The agenda was adopted.

Mr. BARTON (Canada) said that, in view of the possibility of an expansion of its membership, it would be preferable for the Special Committee to adjourn its work until a later date. He made a formal proposal to that effect.

Mr. BOUQUIN (France) supported the proposal and said that, pending the next meeting, the officers might hold consultations on the preparation of a preliminary draft of plans for the celebration.

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Mr. MALALASEKERA (Ceylon) saw no objection to the adjournment of the Committee's work. He wished to emphasize that it was not enough merely to celebrate the fifteenth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights The main objective was to ensure its strict application, having regard, in particular, to the Declaration on the granting of independence to colonial countries and peoples. From that standpoint, the celebration of the fifteenth anniversary of the Universal Declaration was a unique opportunity to take the specific steps called for by the far-reaching changes at present taking place in the world.

Mr. VELAZQUEZ (Uruguay) supported the French representative's suggestion concerning the possibility of preparing a plan of work which could be studied by members of the Committee before the next meeting.

The CHAIRMAN proposed that the Special Committee should adjourn until Monday, 28 January.

It was so decided.

The meeting rose at 4.5 p.m.